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ABSTRACT

This report is a series of interviews with fifteen citizens experienced in school community relations at five different sites across the nation. A background section presents the rationale for and the design of these interviews and introduces the participants. The greater portion of the report presents a summary of and commentary on the interviews which cover such topics as: (1) new sources of legitimacy for citizen action: (2) coalition building and its impact: (3) the isolation of schools from the community: (4) professional resistance to parent involvement: and (5) political resources in urban and rural settings. An appendix provides an abstract of each interview. (Author/APM)

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY

by

Miriam Clasby

IRE Report No. 3

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PREFACE

The Institute for Responsive Education's Reports are an outgrowth of IRE's continuing interest in citizen participation in educational decisionmaking. This Report, by Miriam Clasby, was initially prepared as a report for the U.S. Office of Education's Office of Community Education in July 1979. The author wishes to express thanks to those who volunteered to participate in the interviews contained in this Report.

Editing and production work at IRE was the responsibility of Gian Lombardo and Ross Zerchykov, aided by Owen Heleen. W. Dana Rudolph, IRE Office Manager, typed the manuscript.

ABSTRACT

This Report is a series of interviews with fifteen citizens experienced in school-community relations at five different sites across the nation. A background section presents the rationale for and the design of these interviews and introduces the participants. The greater portion of the Report presents a summary of and commentary on the interviews which cover such topics in school-community relations as: new sources of legitimacy for citizen action; coalition building and its impact; the isolation of schools from the community; professional resistance to parent involvement; and political resources in both urban and rural settings. An appendix provides an abstract of each interview.

INTRODUCTION

In response to the United States Commissioner of Education's School-Home-Community initiative of 1976, the Advisory Council on Education and the United States Office of Education, Office of Community Education have examined the relationships which now exist among the school, the home and the community. As part of this nationwide effort, the Institute for Responsive Education designed a set of interviews with citizens experienced in school-community relations. These interviews explored various aspects of current policy and practice and resulted in recommendations to the United States Commissioner of Education.

This Report describes the design of these interviews and summarizes the views presented. The "Background" section presents the rationale for the undertaking and introduces the participants. The body of this Report presents a summary of and commentary on participants' perspectives on school-community relations. An "Appendix" provides an abstract of each interview.

BACKGROUND

The problem of representativeness -- who can authentically speak for "the community" -- assumes central importance in any effort to reflect community perspectives on school-community relationships. The problem is compounded by the nature of the changes occurring in American schools throughout the twentieth century and the shifts in social, economic, and political dynamics shaping educational policy and practice.

Until the beginning of the 1970's, for example, one of the outstanding features of schooling in America was expansion: growth in curriculum areas; growth in numbers of school-age children served; growth in Federal and state government structures influencing education. This same period was also marked by intensive efforts to establish Fourteenth Amendment rights for those previously excluded from services and decisionmaking on the basis of race, language, class or

sex. Schools were thus charged with responsibility for meeting the needs of all students. More recently, however, declining enrollments, transitions in family life, fiscal constraints, and taxpayer unrest have introduced alternate pressures on schools, professional educators and public policymakers.

An overview of community perspectives on schools must, in some way, register the complexity of the present situation and a diversity of views that resist easy generalization. The task takes further shape from its main purpose: to provide recommendations to the U.S. Commissioner of Education. Four assumptions flowing from that purpose guided the design of the undertaking:

(1) The chief Federal education officer holds unique responsibility for safeguarding the Constitutional rights of citizens and thus promoting the general welfare. Therefore, the concerns of minority or disenfranchised groups and activities which support Constitutional guarantees hold equal priority.

(2) Given the structure of schooling in the United States, the role of the Federal government in education is inescapably dependent on state and local functioning. Therefore, experiences related to both state and local education agencies should be included.

(3) Since enactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), the expenditure of nearly 50 billion dollars for Federally-initiated programs (most with requirements for public participation) has influenced school-community relationships. Therefore, attention should be given to the implementation of Federally-funded programs and especially to the views of recipients of services provided by these programs.

(4) Despite a virtual governmental monopoly on public elementary and secondary schooling, tasks related to public education in our society are shared by a wide range of non-governmental agencies and advocacy groups. Therefore, experiences of community organizations and citizen-initiated groups also merit attention.

In addition, the project aimed to provide a context in which active citizens from both urban and rural settings could interpret their experiences in a dialogue with peers, administrators or academics.

These assumptions and aims guided the selection of sites and participants.

Between December 14, 1978 and January 16, 1979, interviews were scheduled in five sites. An interviewer (frequently an active parent) guided a discussion with two to four participants and prepared a transcript of the interview. Each discussion had a separate focus and a different group of participants:

Washington, D.C.: Perspectives on Two Federal Programs - ESEA Title I and Head Start

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Nancy Spears
Program Director, Alabama Council on Human Relations; Former President, National Head Start Association

Hayes Mizell
Associate Director, Southeastern Public Education Program

Nancy Joyce, Interviewer

Sacramento, California: Perspectives on a State Initiative

Mrs. Marion Joseph
Executive Assistant to Dr. Wilson Riles, Superintendent of Public Instruction, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, California

Mrs. Donna Caravelli
School Community Leader and Parent, San Francisco, California

Dr. Robert H. Ponce
Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, California State Department of Education, Los Angeles, California

Mrs. Jackie Berman
Director, Information Project on Educational Negotiations, Palo Alto, California

Mrs. Arlene Silverman
Parent Interviewer

Tuskegee, Alabama: Perspectives on Community Education

Audrey Henry
Community Education Coordinator, Tuskegee Institute

Willie H. Thomas
Director, Community Education, Tuskegee Institute

T. J. Pinnock
Director, Human Resources Development Center, Tuskegee Institute

Dorothy Riggins, Interviewer

Boston, Massachusetts: Perspectives on Court-Ordered Participation

John O'Bryant
Boston School Committee Member

Carmen Pola
Parent Coordinator, Community District One; Member of Citywide Bilingual Advisory Council (Master PAC)

Tracy Amalfitano
Parent Member, Racial Ethnic Parent Council, Boston English High School; Member of the National Project and Task Force on Desegregation Strategies

Julie Seto
Parent Member of Racial Ethnic Parent Council, Farragut School

Edythe York
Interviewer; Member of Board of Jackson/Mann Community School Council; Past Member of Racial Ethnic Parent Council, Carter School

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Perspectives on Citizen Initiatives

Dr. Bernard Watson
Vice-President for Academic Administration; Professor of Urban Education, Department of Foundations, College of Education; Professor of Urban Studies, College of Liberal Arts, Temple University

Mrs. Happy Fernandez
Staff Member of the Child Care Department, Department of Social Administration, Temple University; Co-Chairperson, Parents Union of Philadelphia

Herbert Wile, Interviewer

Transcripts were edited to strengthen focus and continuity; all participants had an opportunity to review the manuscripts to verify that their positions were accurately recorded.

Despite the variety and richness of perspectives captured in the interviews, it is important to note that the full set of materials falls short of comprehensiveness. Some important contributions to home-school-community relationships are not included here directly: Parent Teacher Associations and Organizations; student organizations; School Volunteers of America groups; parent education activities such as those of the Home and School Institute of Washington, D.C.; school-

based Community Education Programs; and many of the hundreds of Federal programs with participatory components. These omissions resulted from the need to design a manageable activity rather than from deliberate exclusion. A study of wider scope certainly would have given them and similar endeavors the attention they deserve.

Interviewers at each of the five sites were instructed to guide discussions with three questions:

(a) Context: From your perspective, what progress do you see in school community relations?

(b) Diagnosis: What problems have you observed or encountered?

(c) Prescription: What recommendations would you make to the Commissioner of Education in order to strengthen school-community relations?

Participant responses to these questions can, in some ways, be described as "the voice of the people" -- or at least as the voices of a group of sixteen active, experienced men and women playing a variety of roles in widely diverse settings.*

CONTEXTS AND STATUS REPORTS

From Your Perspective, What Progress Do You See In School Community Relations? Participants identified three major areas of progress: new sources of legitimation for citizens' activity; increase in citizens' sophistication and organizational effectiveness; and some evidence of coalition building and impact.

New Sources of Legitimation for Citizen Activity

Across all sites and from widely different perspectives, participants agreed that some progress had been made in recent years to

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* Editor's Note: Although the following summary includes verbatim comments where possible, the complete transcript, available from the Institute for Responsive Education, at cost, offers a more comprehensive record of both individual and group perspectives.

improve interactions between communities and their schools. They saw this progress grounded in legitimation of citizen and parental involvement from government sources such as court decisions and Federal and state legislation.

NAME AND ROLE GROUP	STATEMENT
Tracy Amalfitano Parent Activist, Boston	The court order for desegretation advised all parents that we have a legitimate right to be in schools.
Happy Fernandez Parent Activist, Philadelphia	There is growth and development of community-initiated, citizen-initiated or parent-initiated organizations that are independent of the system. These groups have been helped by the passage of "sunshine laws," by the Federal Freedom of Information Act, and by some of the court decisions and Federal laws establishing rights for students and parents. They provide the basis for groups both outside the system and within the system to influence policy decisions. Citizen and parent groups aren't just begging those in power to listen to them and to make decisions in the students' interests. Some of the laws provide levers of access to information or legal grounding to be an advocate for the student.
Marion Joseph SEA (State Educational Agency), California	What we've done in California is establish practice and law by which the parents have a right to be involved as equal partners in the whole program development, evaluation, and implementation of the school program.
Donna Caravelli Parent Activist, California	We're in the schoolhouse now and we were not there before.

Several comments emphasized the point that these gains are tempered by shifts in school populations and various types of professional resistance to an increased role for citizens in the schools.

Bernard Watson Professor of Education, Philadelphia	In the last six to ten years urban school systems have become increasingly poor and increasingly minority. That has implications not only for the system internally,

	but for the kind of community support which is generated...One of the things that led to the decline of support for Philadelphia Public Schools was the fact the whites had taken their kids out of the public schools...I don't think that there is any less interest on the part of parents; there may well be more because the parents with children in the public schools now understand that they have no alternative but the public schools -- this is the one shot that their children have. What we lack is top-level influence and leadership to pay continuous and regular attention to issues of academic quality and excellence.
Rev. Vernon Jones Tuskegee	If any progress has been made in citizen participation in the Black Belt counties of Alabama, it was not the result of efforts of the schools but the efforts of other programs that were brought into the schools.
John O'Bryant School Board Member, Boston	Even with the court order, in the beginning it was still difficult for parents to have access because the School Committee was in non-compliance and they avoided parents whenever they had the opportunity.
Nancy Spears Program Director, Alabama Human Resources Council	It's in the "single purpose" (Head Start) programs that you find greater parent participation. By "single purpose," I mean a program that is sponsored by an entity like ours, the Alabama Human Resources Council, or by a statewide civil rights organization or a university. These groups have more freedom than those run by school systems.

A shift in modes of school-community relationships unique to the South is reported by Vernon Jones, Tuskegee:

> When I grew up there were very few schools for blacks which were totally supported with public funds. Therefore, parents felt the school was theirs. Once public funding came about, the participation of parents was no longer needed; thus, the school, instead of being their school, became the school that really belonged to the professional educators (who made it quite clear that it was theirs).

In the view of the participants, legislation and court decisions at Federal and state levels have intensified interactions between the school and the community, providing a necessary, though far from ideal, base for satisfactory relationships.

Increase in Citizen Sophistication and Organizational Effectiveness

Progress, for most participants, was also measured in terms of growth for individuals and groups. Two benchmarks for this growth were evidence of increased knowledge and demonstration of organizational and decisionmaking skills.

Tracy Amalfitano Parent Activist, Boston	The court order demystified schools for a lot of parents.
Hayes Mizell Associate Director, Southeastern Public Education Program	At one end of the scale we find PAC's (ESEA Title I Parent Advisory Councils) that are very active, very involved, very secure, or have a very secure sense of their own role and what that is and how to execute it.
Happy Fernandez Parent Activist, Philadelphia	The Philadelphia Parents' Union is a citywide, bi-racial organization, financed and controlled by parents, by the membership. We've focused on parents' rights and other systemwide issues such as school budgets, desegregation, contracts. The Parents' Union also provides advocate services for individual parents and groups of parents in the school.
Nancy Spears Program Director, Alabama Council on Human Relations	They (Head Start Parent Groups) do the interviewing for the Head Start center staff; they recommend who's to be hired in the centers -- teachers, aides, all the way up...They're involved in the day-to-day operation of the program as volunteers and paid classroom aides. They have to be involved in the curriculum that is provided to the children and the health services that are provided. They work on every step. They have the total budget presented to them and they know every penny and how it's being spent.

Such benefits are not restricted to parents. Marion Joseph (Sacramento) summarizes some of the outcomes for administrators committed to comprehensive participation in school programs:

> We learned that you start with the district committee and focus in at the school site. We learned that parents should be involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. We learned that what you needed was a continuous focus on the school program and its effects on children rather than on some other adult goal. We learned the notion of involving the total community. But how do we do that? We wrote the bill and the regulations which included the idea that we should give reward for success.

In general, the testimony highlights the educative effects of parent or citizen involvement for individuals and for groups.

Coalition Building and System Impact

Threading through the conversations are references to two outcomes: building alliances or coalitions with those sharing common goals or concerns and impacting on school systems. Participants frequently pointed to these as desired outcomes, but they reported only limited progress in realizing them. For example: Nancy Spears (Washington, D.C.) described the National Head Start Parent Association as a strong, viable unit which sets policy and provides training to local programs, with participation coming from the grassroots to a national organization. This strong positive feature of Head Start contrasts with two types of difficulties encountered. Although the Head Start program aims to provide a comprehensive range of education, health, and social services with parents in a policy-making role, there is some problem in attracting agency professionals to those decisionmaking processes at the local level. Also, because the Follow-Through program only reaches a small percentage of school-age children, there is a lack of continuity of services once students begin elementary school.

The Citywide Parents Advisory Council mandated by Boston's court order for desegregation provides support and training for local school councils. But Julie Seto (Boston) notes that many parents still feel uninformed about system policies and isolated in their efforts to solve

their problems. The Parents Union of Philadelphia represents a coalition of parents who are addressing systemwide concerns. Yet Happy Fernandez (Philadelphia) notes a sharp decrease in information available to parents and citizens and in the perception that parents can have an impact on school policies.

California legislation for school development builds on common education concerns of both middle- and low-income parents and, thus, offsets the isolation of programs for target populations and the lack of incentive to demonstrate success. The design for participatory planning and evaluation at the individual school level is linked with state-level educational allocations. Marion Joseph (Sacramento) points to the strengths and the limits of the concept:

> We melded our fiscal policy with our public policy -- our social policy -- and that's what makes it work. You could exhort people to involve parents, but if there's nothing for them to do and they have nothing to say, there's a real problem. In the law (AB65), schools operate under their local board policy, but there are dollars that go to specific schools and the plan has to be designed at that school -- designed by the site council which is made up of parents and teachers. The local board is the ultimate in governance and has to approve the plan, but if they don't approve it, they may not change it. They have to send it back for the council to change the plan...If you don't tie your school finance system to this whole issue, then it's not legitimized. It's really something which parents are operating on the periphery. Is it perfect? Hardly. Will it ever be? Never.

The picture, then, is of some successes in building alliances and in incorporating parents into school decisionmaking; some partial success; and many frustrations. Participants were very articulate on the sources of these frustrations.

DIAGNOSIS

What Problems Have You Observed Or Encountered? Five different types of obstacles were identified by participants: the isolation of schools and professionals from the community; professional resistance to parent involvement; fragmentation of effort and parent turnover or burnout; gaps in knowledge and skills; and inadequate resources for

long-term shared planning and evaluation.

Isolation of Schools and Professionals From the Community

A high correlation seemed to exist between the degree of poverty and the intensity of frustration at the remoteness of school staff.

Rev. Vernon Jones Tuskegee	There are communities in Alabama where 90 percent of the teachers live outside the county. Bullock County is a good example...Therefore, you cannot talk in a real sense, with any meaning, about community education in Bullock County because teachers are not there and thus do not know the problems of the community.
Willie Thomas Tuskegee	Many rural communities have no transportation, some have no running water; some have no electricity; some have no health facilities; some have no jobs. Over 75 percent of the people in rural communities are on welfare and depend largely on food stamps. Therefore, the school has to become more involved in planning with the community which will lead over time to economic improvement. This will help everybody involved -- citizens, the school system, the Federal system and the state.
Carmen Pola Parent Activist, Boston	Recently I was shocked when I saw two job descriptions for parent coordinators at the school department level and both were asking for Master's degrees...I should be on Tremont Street beating the bushes or in the school district where I live, but I have to spend my time downtown pulling the coat of some people saying, you are not in Newton, you are not in Wellesley, you are in Boston. And if you've forgotten, hold my hand and we'll go out so you can see where people live. And you can see that nobody with just a Master's degree and a dictionary can really talk to these people. It is really sad that you have to use your energy for this kind of stuff. The only solution is to go back to the unions. I found out that it was the union that added these qualifications.

Professional Resistance to Parent Involvement

Discussions in Boston, Philadelphia and Sacramento cited several instances of professionals who encouraged various modes of parent involvement. Yet, participants repeatedly pointed out that, even when Federal laws, regulations or court orders mandated parent participation, compliance was not assured. At times, in fact, professional resistance was supported by policymakers.

John O'Bryant, school board member in Boston, found that:

> Even with the court order, in the beginning it was still difficult for parents to have access because the School Committee was in non-compliance and they avoided parents whenever they had the opportunity. On several occasions, parents had to go back to the court and say, "Look, we are not getting access." Even the Citywide Coordinating Council (a court-appointed group) which was supposed to be monitoring the system couldn't get into some schools.

Willie Thomas of Tuskegee Institute reports that:

> Superintendents, in fact and in truth, may not want interference from parents. They give lip service to citizen participation, but in many cases school systems are closed to parents. They don't feel that local citizens or parents can give any meaningful inputs and, as a result, they do not seek any.

And, Hayes Mizell, whose Southeastern Public Education Program has monitored Local Education Agency (LEA) compliance of parent involvement requirements in ESEA Title I, found that:

> It doesn't really matter, unfortunately, what the law (ESEA Title I) says or what the regulations require, because school officials or even the Federal officials are going to do exactly what they want. In most cases, we found that those officials consider the whole notion of parent involvement to be the most expendable item in the law -- sort of a frill.

Several participants identified the problem of "principal overburden" as a cause for lack of cooperation, especially when more than one type of advisory group was mandated. Discussions in Boston, Philadelphia and Sacramento all included some reference to constraints on school-community relations related to union contracts. Both specific provisions negotiated in contracts and the more general tendency of bargaining to centralize decisionmaking at the district level were

perceived as reducing the sphere of influence for parents and citizens at the individual school level.

Fragmentation of Effort and Parent Turnover/Burnout

Participants in four sites focused attention on the proliferation of mandated mechanisms for parent participation which militated against coordination of efforts. These same groups experienced the problems associated with rapid turnover when parents were assigned one-year terms on school councils. They also pointed to the difficulties in expanding the base of participation beyond a few people in leadership roles. Tracy Amalfitano and Carmen Pola (Boston) both warned of the danger of "professionalization" of the parent role and creation of new types of bureaucracies by parent groups. In general, however, problems of recruitment and organization were traced to the related needs for information, training and system changes.

Gaps in Knowledge and Skills

The need for information and training -- for both parents and professionals -- was a common theme at all the sites. Happy Fernandez (Philadelphia) emphasized that a solid data base as well as analyses prepared by professionals can be helpful in giving parents something to work with and react to. The development of communication and organizational skills for outreach to other parents was high on the list of priorities. Although participants in Sacramento differed somewhat on the point of whether parents and school staff should receive training together, there was agreement that certain skills, such as conflict-resolution, could be developed jointly.

The need for information and training for school personnel was mentioned frequently. Hayes Mizell (Washington, D.C.) notes:

> Actually the people who have shown the least interest of all in parent involvement are the professionals who are charged with enforcing the law. Even in situations where Title I coordinators are not hostile to the concept of parent involvement, we have found many cases in which they do not understand what the Parent Advisory Council is and how it is supposed to function. In addition, they lack skills to constructively and responsibly involve the Parent Advisory Council in the decisionmaking process or in the advisory process.

In highlighting the importance of interracial understanding, Boston participants pointed to the need for formal, organized experiences in building human relations. John O'Bryant (Boston) said:

> I don't see how you can talk about desegregating a system without preplanning, without interpersonal and human relations activities.

And, Carmen Pola (Boston) notes that:

> We have to start at the beginning; we have to go to the kids and develop programs with them. But there must be personnel at the school buildings who understand what we are talking about and that is one of the biggest problems... We just don't have professionals at the building level ready to help create a dialogue that is productive.

Emphases varied but participants at all sites reiterated a need for a mode of adult education reaching both those functioning as professionals and those functioning as members of the public served by the professionals.

Inadequate Resources for Long-Term Shared Planning and Evaluation

Organizational constraints also received major attention. Although Marion Joseph and Robert Ponce (Sacramento) presented a design for comprehensive, shared planning and evaluation of local school operations, other participants identified problems of lack of trained personnel, time and money. Bernard Watson (Philadelphia) observed:

> Long-range planning is not something developed by an English or Math or History teacher; there is a knowledge base to the planning process. You must have competent people. I think there has to be immense community input at every step in the development of a long-range plan because the plans, in fact, define what public education ought to look like over the long term... We know that the technology exists for providing appropriate input to plan well. If you ask if that is being done in Philadelphia, the answer is clearly no. But it has been done, and it is being done in some other places -- and in large cities.

John O'Bryant (Boston) noted the negative impact of Federal funding patterns on the planning process:

> Part of the problem is the way outside funds come from the Federal and state levels -- earmarked for special purposes. Sometimes those people seem to be on their own agenda kick, so they decide: "Next year we will fund X kinds of programs."

> The priority may be totally irrelevant to our needs or to the special problems we want to deal with -- human relations programs, for example... Setting priorities for external funds is a serious problem. The Federal government can have some input in that by mandating that parents be involved from the beginning in the planning process for deciding how funds are spent. But it takes commitment and it takes time. It's not a thing that can be done on one budget cycle. We have to be able to project and plan well in advance.

Carmen Pola (Boston) advocated parent participation in Federal evaluations:

> I feel very strongly that the Federal government should include a very clear and strong mandate for parent involvement with all money they allocate to any city. It should include monitoring through parents, not high-paid consultants. There should be a sharing situation. There are certain skills that parents do not have, so there has to be a sharing between parents and professionals trying to really monitor... Federal dollars are coming to the city, so certain things should be happening. But the Federal government doesn't get word that they are not happening because they do not use teamwork. They don't ask the people -- parents and students -- who are receiving the services. Clear mechanisms should be developed to include parents in the monitoring process and if the money is not being used for productive purposes, it should be taken away.

These needs -- of parents, professionals, and Federal, state and local systems -- laid the groundwork for the recommendations which follow.

PRESCRIPTIONS

What Recommendations Would You Make To The Commissioner Of Education To Improve The Quality Of School-Community Relations? Some of the recommendations advanced by participants are specific policy proposals; others represent more general suggestions drawn from the discussions. To accomodate both types of material, recommendations are presented in terms of the goals to be achieved.

Participants repeatedly called for leadership at all levels of the educational enterprise and for better interaction between Federal and state and state and local agencies in leadership tasks. Recommendations for Federal leadership led in two directions: revision of current

policies and practices; and, allocation of additional resources to support community involvement.

1.0 It Is Recommended That The Federal Government Revise Current Policies and Practices In Order To:

1.1 Reduce Proliferation Of Mandated Advisory Groups. Participants at the four sites commented on the dysfunctional character of having a multiplicity of advisory groups. No immediate solutions were at hand and Hayes Mizell concluded that the resolution of the problem calls for careful rethinking in order to identify the appropriate structures for parent/citizen involvement in Federal programs.

1.2 Increase Flexibility To Accomodate Variations In State And Local Needs. Revisions in procedures for establishing funding priorities and timelines were recommended, for different reasons, by participants, in an urban setting and those in a rural setting.

- In Boston, categorical funding prescriptions were seen as preventing a timely response to identified needs.
- In Tuskegee, special transportation needs could not be met because of restrictions on adult education expenditures.
- Sacramento participants recommended the use of waivers from regulations for education agencies which can demonstrate that through other means, they have already met or exceeded the intent of the legislation or regulation.

1.3 Strengthen Federal Mandates And Incentives For Community Involvement. No sites proposed any weakening of the Federal role and four different suggestions for enhancing that role included:

1.3.1 Building in Penalties for Non-Compliance with Requirements for Participation (Bernard Watson, Philadelphia).

1.3.2 Strengthening Evaluation Procedures by Including Those Who Receive Services (parents and students) as Members of Monitoring and Evaluation Teams (Carmen Pola, Boston).

1.3.3 Restructuring Programs in Order to Facilitate Coordination of Services and Linkages With Communities and Their Services, by:

(a) Reducing isolation of separate programs for low-income, bilingual and handicapped (Tracy Amalfitano, Boston).

(b) Linking low- and middle-income groups in planning a total school program (Marion Joseph and Robert Ponce, Sacramento).

(c) Requiring school departments such as vocational/agricultural and home economic units to collaborate with community agencies to improve their response to the needs of students (Vernon Jones, Tuskegee).

(d) Mandating annual state workshops to discuss ways and means through which community education can better serve the state and requiring a thorough evaluation of what has been accomplished over a five-year period (T. E. Pinnock, Tuskegee).

1.3.4 Establishing Priorities for Educational Programs Which Enhance Community Involvement, by:

(a) Generalizing Individualized Educational Plans: Happy Fernandez (Philadelphia) recommended mandating an individual program for every child as P.L. 94-142 does for handicapped children as a way to encourage school systems to tailor programs to the child's needs rather than to teacher or administration needs. She sees this as a way to head off pressure for tuition tax credit for non-public schools

because some parents choose non-public schools when they feel unable to get the public system to meet their child's educational needs.

(b) Providing Adult Education for Civic Competency: T. E. Pinnock (Tuskegee) cited the necessity for public education to train citizens how to use their elected officials: "Every elected official is a servant of the people. If this fact is not conceptualized this way, participatory democracy is not being executed. Problems in a community should be carried all the way up. Many people do not know this process."

(c) Clarifying the Functions of Bilingual Education: After describing problems with bilingual programs, Carmen Pola (Boston) commented: "To change this we need strong leadership from educators, from professionals, and from the bilingual educators in the city. We need dialogue among people of all ethnic groups so that they understand bilingual education and its purposes. We need an understanding in the bilingual community of what the law means and what should be happening in their kids' education. It is important that the Federal and state government really apply some pressure to clean up the whole system and make it work."

(d) Disseminating Information About Model Programs: Hayes Mizell (D.C.) noted: "The Federal government division of education of the disadvantaged in the U.S. Office of Education, which is charged with administering Title I, does not have any process for being able to tell you which are the positive, good practices that are currently in existence around

the country for parent involvement; who are the people who are doing something right and what it's worth and whether it's successful. That means there's no leadership. Nobody is saying, 'Here are some people who are carrying the torch.' That's what we need."

2.0 Providing Training For Both Parents And School Personnel. Each of the problems identified in the section entitled "Diagnosis" offered strong evidence of a variety of training needs for both school staffs and community members. A range of technical and interpersonal skills to improve school-community relationships were identified. Parents at all sites also gave special emphasis to the need for developing organizational skills to expand the base of participation. They also stressed the value of experienced parents sharing their knowledge and skills with other parents. Two additional recommendations target more specific needs:

- T. E. Pinnock (Tuskegee) suggested intensive teacher training programs to apprise teachers of the importance of developing meaningful relations with the community. He added that one criterion for teacher promotion should be based on the documented relationship that they have had with the community and the kinds of community projects that they, as teachers, have developed with parents and students.

- In addition to a general recommendation for seed money for independent community groups, Happy Fernandez (Philadelphia) proposed that the Office of Education (or some other unit such as Juvenile Justice) provide small training grants to independent parent and citizen groups for implementing the due process procedures in P.L. 42-142. Parents Union, for example, has developed a program that trains parent advocates who, in turn, assist parents to use the provisions of the law to secure an appropriate educational setting for their handicapped child.

CONCLUSION

Two themes which linked the five sites merit comment, even though they do not lend themselves to specific recommendations. First, the three urbanized sites raised the problem of tensions with unions. Although the implications for the Federal government are unclear, the issues of the accountability of professionals and other public employees was of central importance.

Second, in all five sites, participants voiced concern about the future of public education. The sources of concern varied:

> The potential of tuition vouchers and tax credits for eroding the base of public support for schools (Jackie Berman, Sacramento).
>
> The economic distress of a community calling for rethinking of the whole educational system (Audrey Henry, Tuskegee).
>
> Insensitivity to racial and ethnic diversity pointing a need for new patterns of staffing (Carmen Pola, Boston).
>
> The hope for a system equipping children to live in the 21st century demanding a healthy dialogue and disagreement (Happy Fernandez, Philadelphia: "Anyone who presumes to know what kids today are really going to need to function in the year 2030 is a fool. There really has to be a lot of collectiveness [in planning ahead]. We'll make a lot of mistakes.")

These concerns for the future, some general, some specific, united citizens from large cities and rural counties, from East Coast to West. They are not immediate and trivial, but long-term and profound and they add special intensity to the proposals for action developed to address them.

APPENDIX: ABSTRACTS OF INTERVIEWS

Washington, D.C.: Perspectives on Two Federal Programs: ESEA Title I and Head Start

Hayes Mizell draws on his experience providing technical assistance to ESEA Title I Parent Advisory Councils through the Southeastern Public Education Program. He notes that parents in urban areas tend to show more sophistication than their rural counterparts because they often have had some background as a member of a deliberative body; at the same time, urban school personnel seem more comfortable working with parents. Parent participation is hindered by infrequent meetings, annual turnover in membership, and absence of adequate training for the complex responsibilities that participation entails. He emphasizes that information for training is available, but is not used because of lack of interest and commitment to that requirement of the regulations. He advocates re-examination of the proliferation of lay advisory groups and stresses the importance of developing linkages among various programs. He calls for leadership at Federal and state levels reflecting commitment to implementing the law and indentifying positive practices: "Nobody is saying, 'Here are some people who are carrying the torch,' and that is what we need."

Nancy Spears, former National Head Start Association President and Program Director of the Alabama Council on Human Relations, highlights the strong mandates in Head Start legislation which affirm a policymaking role for parents. Also, parents function at various levels of the program -- as classroom aides, volunteers, and decision-makers. She contrasts the higher level of parent involvement in programs run by non-school agencies with the lesser involvement in school-sponsored programs. Parent training is provided by staff or consultants. Because only three-fourths of Council parents can be new each year, experienced parents are also involved in training newcomers. Strong alliances with state and national groups have contributed to

the effectiveness of councils and data now point to the positive impact of such involvement on children's learning. Lack of agency participation, however, often hinders efforts to provide comprehensive services while lack of continuity as children move to school also frustrates progress. Stressing that the majority of Head Start programs serve parents who have previously been denied an opportunity to make decisions for themselves or their children, she comments: "It's very important that they have a say in the life of their child. It's also a learning ground which I hope will make them continue to be interested in the education of their children." She describes the Head Start Parent Association as a model: a strong, viable unit which sets policy and provides training to local programs with participation coming from the grassroots to a national organization.

Sacramento, California: Perspectives on State Initiatives

Mrs. Marion Joseph, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Dr. Robert H. Ponce, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, outline the history and pattern of California legislation for school councils which represent the total community in planning and evaluating individual school programs. Specifically designed to address the isolation of programs for target populations (such as Title I) and negative incentives in allocating funds to schools with underachieving students, the law builds a coalition of all parents and directs funds to schools demonstrating success. Marion Joseph emphasizes that California has established by law and practice that parents have a right to be involved as equal partners in program development, implementation, and evaluation. Robert Ponce points out that the partnership model provided an opportunity for middle-class parents to join with parents of children in special programs to focus on the school operation. The strategy assumes the need for partnership of all parents to meet the needs of all children. Marion Joseph is convinced that with a system which recognizes every child as an individual with needs to be met and the right of all parents to be involved

in the process, middle-class parents will accept the notion that poor or handicapped children have needs that cost more and thus support these programs. Furthermore, connecting the requirements for participation with the school finance system melds fiscal policy with social policy.

Donna Caravelli recounts her experience as a parent in San Francisco to give evidence of the effectiveness of the partnership concept. Although the city had traditionally received large Title I allocations annually without the need to demonstrate success, the California program changed the behavior of district personnel. Parents brought pressure because they wanted their children to be in a school participating in the state program and that could only happen when those already participating produced positive results for children. Even the reluctance of officials to be responsive encouraged parents to organize themselves -- both low- and middle-income -- to educate each other in ways to "work" the system. She emphasizes the need to develop new leadership constantly and to include a wide range of community members (such as grandparents as volunteers or businessmen released by employers to tutor).

Jackie Berman, Director of the Information Project on Educational Negotiations, stresses the importance of the legitimacy and support provided by the Superintendent for Public Instruction and the State Department of Education which was translated into legislation and thus into dollars. She calls attention to the conflict between the decentralizing tendencies inherent in encouraging decisionmaking at the local school level and the centralizing tendencies in collective bargaining. Without careful attention to this tension, she foresees a gradual usurping of decisionmaking at the school level. She describes several ways in which citizens can have some access to the bargaining process without undermining legitimate rights of employees to organize. Convinced that the schism between professionals and citizens is not working to the advantage of professionals in their task of education, she sees a need for parents and teachers to reduce barriers and become allies. Noting movements towards vouchers and tax credit incentives,

she sees public education in great peril and in great need of more diversity within the existing system.

The group as a whole strongly supports additional resources for public information and for training for parents and community groups in areas such as organizing techniques, budgets, and conflict resolution. There are differences of opinion as to whether such training should take place for parents alone or in conjunction with school personnel, but there is consensus that conflict resolution skills might best be learned together. In addition to recommendations for additional resources for training and for tax incentives for participation in schools, the group strongly supports the concept of a waiver of regulations attached to Federal programs through a procedure which would maintain the integrity of the funds, but allow flexibility to schools which had met or surpassed the intent of the legislation or regulation.

Tuskegee, Alabama: Perspectives on Community Education

Rev. Vernon A. Jones of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church sees whatever progress that has been made in school-community relations as the result of programs brought into the schools rather than as a result of efforts of the schools. Whereas schools in the Black Belt of Alabama had formerly been partially funded by parents who felt the schools were theirs, now with public funds they belong to the professionals. In addition, desegregation has shifted the community base of the schools. Pointing to the extreme poverty of Southern rural communities -- some with no transportation, no running water, electricity or health facilities -- he stresses the plight of unemployment and the fact that in some communities more than 75 percent of the population is on welfare and dependent on food stamps. He considers it essential that schools become more involved in planning with the community for economic development. In this context, he advocates channeling funds for community education in the Deep South through vocational/agricultural or home economics departments of schools. He makes the case that

training for jobs requires a relationship with community agencies and that, regardless of the quality of the program, these two departments are the ones that have this contract.

Dr. Willie Thomas, Director of Community Education at Tuskegee Institute, notes that some parents do not become involved in schools because they do not feel welcome. Though administrators may give lip service to participation, they often do not actively seek citizen input. Even in Federally-funded programs, he finds a type of manipulation which discourages parents from further participation. He also points out that it is difficult to talk about community education when, as in Bullock County, 90 percent of the teachers live outside the county. This and other factors which isolate the school mean that community needs (such as lack of solid waste disposal) seem unrelated to school concerns. Thus, the school seems to exist for itself without regard for the conditions that exist around it. He proposed expansion of adult education programs which, in rural areas, calls for special features such as support for transportation.

As Community Education Coordinator, Mrs. Audrey Henry cites the lack of administrative support for community education which prevents public knowledge of the concept. She makes a relationship between the economic circumstances of the community and participation because of the obstacles to involvement created by poverty. Pointing to the need for cooperative arrangements among citizens, local school systems, and agencies (such as Health, Welfare, Pensions and Security Departments), she suggests that through coordinated efforts, such agencies could develop training programs for citizens.

Dr. T. J. Pinnock, Director of the Human Resources Development Center of Tuskegee Institute, emphasizes recent historical patterns which have reduced public involvement in schools. Particularly when parents with little formal training are likely to feel inadequate and isolated, there is a need for school personnel to make them feel welcome and to encourage their contributions. In too many instances, involvement has only been sought for fund-raising purposes. Resulting alienation from the school leads to problems of vandalism because

people do not see the school as "their place." Advocating a total review of school curriculum to give priority to communication skills and job preparation, he suggests alliances between schools and organizations such as the Farmers' Home Administration. For him, the plight of children who come from homes "where chickens can be seen through the floor and the sky through the roof" is the business of schools. He recommends intensive teacher training programs to apprise them of the importance of developing meaningful relationships with the community as well as developing criteria for teacher promotion based on the documented relationship they have had with the community and with community projects they have carried out with parents and students. He proposes an annual state workshop to discuss ways and means through which community education can better serve the state and, finally, calls for evaluation after a five-year period. Although he anticipates resistance from states on the grounds of usurpation of authority, he sees a need for the Federal government to take a strong role in evaluating the functions and results of community education programs.

Boston, Massachusetts: Perspectives on Court-Ordered Participation

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Tracy Amalfitano, a member of the English High School Racial-Ethnic Parent Council and of the National Project and Task Force on Desegregation Strategies, speaks as a parent from South Boston who sees the benefits of the Court Order for desegregation in alerting school personnel that parents have a right to be in the school. It has also helped instruction by opening the schools to new types of sharing. She voices several cautions: the danger that participation may become a "middle-class" exercise without ties to grassroots constituencies; the pressures on parents to become knowledgeable in all areas from budget to curriculum to custodial services and thus assume tasks for which professionals are paid to be accountable; and the risk that active parents may establish a new bureaucracy as rigid as the one they are trying to change. She is worried about the lack of attention to issues of "brotherhood" since interracial understanding is

expected to occur without articulation or support. She sees the need for a clear definition of parent involvement, for assurances of long-range continuity, and for training in organizing community groups. She recommends collaborative efforts with existing resources in the areas of health, social services, ethnic organizations, and parent training organizations, as well as the elimination of patterns which cause programs for bilingual, low-income and handicapped children to "bump against each other," creating competition among groups and fragmenting services.

John O'Bryant, member of the Boston School Committee and Vice-President for Administration at Northeastern University, charts the progress in providing access for citizens to the schools, despite initial resistance by elected and administrative officials. He sees the role of principal as critical to the development of effective home-school relationships and stresses the importance of parent input in the selection of administrators. Citing instances of obstructive behavior by both teacher and custodial unions, he expects that recent administrative reorganization will help reduce the problems. In addition to urging parents to reach out to develop new leadership, he urges ongoing attention to the problem of interracial understanding. To obviate the problems experienced in developing proposals for Federal and state funding, he urges flexibility in addressing local priorities and appropriate timelines to support adequate planning and continuity.

As a member of the Farragut School Racial-Ethnic Parent Council, Julie Seto speaks to the special problems of Asian-Americans. Recognizing that many parents have now become involved in their children's education for the first time, she notes the importance of the city-level group in providing support for local groups. Yet she observes that large numbers of parents are not yet involved. The reasons vary widely: some feel that professionals are now leaving the work for parents to do; others have little understanding of the functioning of the school system, its organization, policies and practices. Language is a critical obstacle because of the variety of dialects and the lack

of translators either within the school system or in parent groups. She also describes the constraints on low-income families when both parents work very long hours. She recommends increased attention to communications -- providing parents with information on the progress of school programs and of the students, and especially arranging for interpreters for meetings and for coordinators who can reach busy parents in their homes. She supports special attention to human relations dimensions of participation for adults as well as for children.

Carmen Pola holds positions as Parent Coordinator for Community District One and as member of the Citywide Bilingual Advisory Council (Master PAC). In her view, in addition to giving parents access to schools, court-ordered desegregation has increased interaction among different racial-ethnic groups. Although some progress has been made in parent involvement, she notes that some schools with weak educational programs are still closed to parents. Her experience has brought her to recognize the critical role played by teacher and custodial unions and she calls for the leadership of school administrators in working out solutions to the problems entailed. She challenges various modes of school operation, including shifting policies which prevent parents from communicating clear information to other parents; unrealistic procedures such as requiring graduate credentials for community coordinator positions; and the absence of basic curriculum guidelines for the general school program as well as for bilingual programs. Warning against the danger of the development of "professional parents," she stresses the importance of outreach to the largest possible number of parents. Pointing to the long history of non-compliance with Federal and state bilingual requirements, she advocates stricter monitoring processes and including parents whose children are recipients of services as part of the evaluating team. Specifically, she calls for leadership in developing a dialogue about bilingual education for clearer public understanding of its intent and purposes.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Perspectives on Voluntary Citizen Participation

Dr. Bernard Watson holds the position of Vice-President for Administration and professorial appointments in both the School of Education and College of Liberal Arts at Temple University. Noting that in wealthier and smaller communities, citizens have always had influence over their schools, he observes that citizen participation began to attract attention when poor and minority people began to get involved at the same level. He describes the openness of the Philadelphia Board of Education during the 1960's and contrasts it with the current period. He ascribes decreases in number of participants in schools to the change in racial composition of the schools. When school systems reach 70 percent minority, many influential and active citizens no longer have their children in public schools and this diminishes public support. When schools serve predominantly minority and poor populations, the major interest of school administrators is to control expenditures rather than to ensure quality. He cites the lack of top-level influence and leadership to pay continuous and regular attention to issues of academic quality and excellence. Much of the discussion of "community control," he observes, is misleading because both the law and the realities of collective bargaining mean that areas of decisionmaking that can be delegated under our present system are very narrow. He urges citizen attention to central concerns: the nature of the superintendent's contract; the basis for allocating certain funds to various districts and school sites; the kinds of minimum things that every child ought to have; the allocation of outside resources. He considers it important to acknowledge that public criticism of education has a basis in fact, and to sort out problems where something can be done by cooperative efforts of professionals and the public. When the public says that schools are failing, for example, it is necessary to talk about which youngsters are affected and then begin to develop ways of approaching that significant percentage of young people for whom schools are not doing very much. Emphasizing

the importance of competencies for long-range planning and for public input in that process, he cites experiences in Detroit, St. Louis, and San Francisco to demonstrate that the technology for involvement in planning exists, even if it is not widely used. Schools cannot avoid wrestling with problems inherent in federalism, attempting to work out an appropriate balance between Washington and the states, between states and localities. Whatever the obstacles encountered, he expects the poor and minorities to continue their efforts to participate because of the importance to them of what they are fighting for. In his view, the Federal government should continue to mandate participation and strengthen the regulations with penalties for non-compliance.

Mrs. Happy Fernandez is Co-Chairperson of the Parents' Union of Philadelphia, and is an Assistant Professor, Child Care Department, Department of Social Administration, Temple University. Outlining the origins of the Parents' Union in the midst of a 1972 school strike, she describes its activities as a parent-controlled organization addressing systemwide issues and providing advocate services. She highlights the importance of Federal and state legislation and court cases in supporting the rights of parents to have access to information and decision-making. Pointing to the highly centralized structure in a big system which is heavily influenced by equally distant political systems, she advocates decentralization of decisionmaking to local schools. Her work has produced evidence that the sense of being disenfranchised is as common among parents in small rural districts and towns as it is in large cities. Too many parents, she finds, have their attention diverted from influencing basic decisions about schools to fundraising and social activities. Professional skills can be valuable resources to parents in providing a data base and analyses for groups to react to and, although it may seem easier and quicker to manipulate or short-circuit community participation in planning, she assumes that, in the long run, there will be a healthier public schools system if the community is really involved. She encourages administrators to assist in developing new parent leadership rather than relying exclusively on experienced people. Because an independent group such as the Parents'

Union constantly faces funding problems, she advocates the allocation of seed money, funds to enable community groups to have staff and supplies and time and energy to cope with some of the problems. She sees the need for a multiplicity of groups -- Federal and state mandated as well as local citizen groups. To encourage access to information, to schools and to training resources for the purposes of improving the quality of education, she offers four recommendations: 1) alteration of F.C.C. regulations and funding to televise school board meetings on public television; 2) clarification by Federal regulation or court action of the rights of citizens and parents to have access to schools; 3) mandates for an Individualized Educational Program for each child; and 4) small training grants for independent parent and citizen groups to utilize the due process portion of P.L. 94-142.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Miriam Clasby is an Associate Clinical Professor at the Boston University School of Education and serves as the coordinator for the Boston University Collaborative Office, a program linking the University with 16 Boston public schools under court-ordered desegregation. She also serves as Associate Director of the Institute for Responsive Education. Her research interests include educational policy and practice at local and state levels. Dr. Clasby's most recent publications examine linkages between research on effective schools and patterns of citizen participation in school operations and decision-making.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

The Institute for Responsive Education (IRE) is a private, non-profit national research, policy analysis and technical assistance organization with a seven-year history of conducting studies on and disseminating information about community involvement in school decisionmaking. Although private and independent, IRE is housed at Boston University, where its President and founder, Don Davies, formerly Deputy Commissioner in the United States Office of Education, is now Professor in the School of Education.

Founded on the premises that citizen participation is an essential ingredient in school improvement and that citizens' access to information is indispensable for effective participation, IRE has, throughout its seven-year history, produced more than 22 reports including field-research monographs, bibliographies and literature reviews, and translations of complex, educational issues into popular form.

IRE Reports are yet another series of publications that have arisen from continuing IRE efforts to better understand and assist citizen participation in educational decisionmaking and to disseminate this information and experience to citizens, educators and policymakers.

IRE has been involved in other facets of citizen participation which include school-community councils, citizen roles in educational collective bargaining, Federal and state policies affecting citizen participation, the role of citizen-initiated organizations, declining enrollment, and citizen action research for school improvement.

In all of its work, IRE stresses a combination of study and action which makes for richer and more useful research and for action that has a solid base of data and experience. Hence, in addition to conducting studies and producing reports aimed primarily at policymakers, IRE has continued to collect and disseminate materials for community groups and citizens interested in school decisionmaking. To this end, IRE houses an ongoing Clearinghouse of Information for Citizens and publishes a national newsletter, Citizen Action in Education. Through this Clearinghouse, IRE addresses community-based education needs by

the continual collection of reports, studies and handbooks, the publication of packets and resource guides, and, whenever possible, the dissemination of information in response to phone calls and written requests. With a subscription list of nearly 24,000, Citizen Action in Education reports on current developments and models in the field of citizen participation in educational decisionmaking.

In order to expand the Clearinghouse and its utility, we openly invite more materials on citizen participation. This will assist us in our efforts to provide more specific information to groups and individuals requesting assistance. Please send materials and ideas to:

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